THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

Guidelines for Episcopal Visitations

2020-2021

The Rt. Rev. Susan Brown Snook

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Visitations are an opportunity for your congregation to focus on its mission and ministry, and to strengthen connections with the wider Body of Christ. They are one of the great joys of episcopal ministry, and I look forward to sharing them with you and learning about your congregation and its surrounding community.

BEFORE THE VISITATION

1. To assist in the preparation of my visit, the completed Bishop's Visitation Worksheet should be sent to my Executive Assistant at least 30 days before the visitation. It is important that specific expectations and objectives for the visit be described on the completed form. The bulletins, worksheet, and final draft of the schedule of activities for the visit should be sent to the Bishop's Executive Assistant three weeks before the visit. You may find the worksheet on our website at www.edsd.org/bishopvisitations, and you can reach my assistant, Keren Mondaca, at kmondaca@edsd.org.
2. Keren Mondaca will arrange for a phone call between your congregation's lead clergy member and me about two weeks before my visit. During this call, we can work out other details of the visitation. I would also like to hear from you about your congregation's ministries and challenges.
3. The enclosed Vestry Discussion Questionnaire contains several questions I would like your vestry or bishop's committee to discuss at the last vestry meeting before my visitation. During my visit, I would like to discuss these questions with you.
4. If required, my office will arrange overnight accommodations for me.

DURING THE VISITATION

1. I will normally preach and preside at each of your weekend liturgies, at Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist. I anticipate that all visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist.
2. If you are holding services online, I can preside and preach from your location or from my home.
3. On Sundays, the propers for the day from the Revised Common Lectionary should be used, unless you have received prior permission to use different scriptures. Normally the liturgical color will be that of the day. I will often wear congregational vestments, but I may bring vestments of my own.
4. Please schedule the following additional events in connection with my visit:
    a. A meeting with candidates for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation before the service. Please ensure that the candidates wear name tags.
    b. A time for teaching. My preference is for a conversational "forum" opportunity, where I may speak about church mission and other issues, and answer questions from the floor.
    c. A time for a meeting with the Vestry or Bishop's Committee. During this time, I would like to hear your thoughts on the discussion questions found on the Vestry Preparation

Questionnaire. If you are currently in transition between rectors/vicars, please include the search committee in this meeting.

5. The Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge should make the usual congregational announcements. It is important both to include in the bulletin an announcement, and explain to the congregation verbally, that the loose offering will be designated for the Bishop's Pastoral Needs Fund, along with any checks designated for that purpose. These funds allow me to make much-needed contributions to assist people throughout the diocese and beyond.
6. If you have congregational traditions such as birthday prayers, prayer quilt blessings, or other pastoral activities during the service, it is appropriate for parish clergy to lead those.
7. A deacon, assigned by the Archdeacon, will accompany me on many visits. The deacon will serve as my chaplain and fulfill deacon's responsibilities during the service. Please consider whether some members of your congregation may have a call to a particular ministry of service, including ordained ministry as a deacon, and give them opportunities to interact with the deacon who accompanies me.
8. During the visitation, congregational records and documents, including Church and Service Registers, should be available for inspection before the first service.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

Community Engagement:

I am particularly interested in how members of your congregation are living out their baptismal ministries in response to and in partnership with others in the local and wider communities. How are you getting to know your neighbors, their needs, hopes, and longings? How are you engaged in God's mission of evangelism and service in your community? What opportunities for expanding God's mission through the Episcopal Church have you seen in your local community? How has your community changed in recent years, and how well does your congregation reflect the demographics of your neighborhood? I would be glad to discuss these matters with you on the telephone, and to address them with the vestry or in the adult forum.

Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation:

Baptism is full membership in the body of Christ. Full preparation of sponsors (and parents of children to be baptized), as well as of the mature candidate, is essential. It is appropriate that adults be baptized (and thus confirmed in the same service) by the bishop. I encourage you to hold adult baptism for such visitation.

As with baptism, full preparation of candidates for confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation is expected. Confirmation is appropriate for those who were baptized at an early age and never made an adult affirmation of faith. Reception is appropriate for people who have made an adult affirmation of faith in another Church Communion and now wish to be a part of the Episcopal Church. Reaffirmation is for those who have been confirmed or received at an earlier time in their lives and have now undergone a spiritual transformation that makes a new beginning in faith an appropriate step in their journey.

Please schedule at least a few minutes for me to meet with any candidates before the service.

SCHEDULING

The scheduling of visitations will be coordinated by the Bishop's Office, and you are encouraged to request any particularly desired dates.

LITURGICAL GUIDELINES

I anticipate that all visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. I recognize that during the current year of pandemic, there may be some exceptions to this rule. In addition, during the time when worship restrictions are in place because of the pandemic, I will review your safety precautions with you over the phone before my visit.

When there are no baptisms, confirmations, or receptions, the liturgy on the day of the bishop's visitation should include the Renewal of Baptismal Vows. This should be substituted for the Nicene Creed at all services, even those that are otherwise Rite I. Please use the form found on Page 292, omitting the phrase in the preface, "now that our Lenten observance is ended." I will conclude the Renewal of Baptismal Vows with the prayer found on page 294. The liturgy continues with the Prayers of the People.

The Proper of the Day will be used, even when initiation rites are to take place, and normally the liturgical color will be that of the day. Any departure from this should be discussed with me before the day of the visitation. As required by the Canons, you should be using the Revised Common Lectionary.

If a children's sermon is your normal practice, please inform me ahead of time, and I will prepare a children's message. If children begin the service in the nave and then are dismissed to children's chapel or Sunday school, I would like to interact with and bless the children before they depart. I am always happy to spend time with the children in the congregation in other contexts as well.

I am happy to sing as much of the liturgy as desired. I will use the solemn tone.

I will often wear the vestments of the parish, although I can bring vestments if advised beforehand. Otherwise I will bring a plain alb, mitre, and pastoral staff. I will generally wear the chasuble for the entire liturgy, rather than changing to or from a cope, except on high festival days (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, etc.).

I will stand for confirmations and receptions, so the bishop's chair may remain in its usual location.

The archdeacon attempts to schedule a deacon at each Episcopal Visitation. Please count on a deacon being involved in the liturgy. The normal functions of a deacon in the liturgy include: proclaiming the gospel, bidding the Confession, setting the table, and dismissing the congregation. The details of assisting the bishop will normally also include such things as:

- holding the Prayer Book during the initiatory rites so that my hands are free
- receiving and retrieving the pastoral staff at various times during the liturgy
- assisting at baptisms.

In the absence of a deacon, those duties may be performed by parish clergy, a senior acolyte, or assisting lay minister.

If additional pastoral acts are requested, such as commissioning officers or ministers, I am more than willing to do that as part of the offertory. The brief service on pp 420-421 is often suitable.

At confirmation, reception, or reaffirmation, please have the candidates wear nametags that clearly show the candidate's name, in large, bold print. Please present the candidates in groups: first candidates for confirmation, then candidates for reception, then candidates for reaffirmation.

Chrism is not used for confirmation. In the New Testament, anointing is associated with Baptism. In the Prayer Book, the use of chrism occurs only in the baptismal liturgy, while the laying on of hands is associated with confirmation. Note that the baptism of an adult includes anointing and completes the rite, and constitutes confirmation.

If part or all of your worship service is customarily in Spanish, I will gladly preside in Spanish. I will preach in English. If an interpreter is needed for my sermon, please provide one from the congregation.

AFTER THE VISITATION

Please return to the Office of the Bishop the confirmation record signed by the clergy to Registrar Alyson Terry, aterry@edsd.org, or by mail. In addition, please send contributions to the Bishop's Pastoral Needs Fund. Checks should be made out to "EDSD" with "Bishop's Fund" in the memo line. Please mail checks to the following address:

The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego
2083 Sunset Cliffs Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92107